C325 LETTER/INTERVIEW PAPER

Issue to Address	Good	Missing	Need More
(a) What looked like?	✓		
Research/class info?			
(b) Teachers and schooling?	✓		
Research/class info?			
(c) Happiest achievement?	✓		
Research/class info?			
(d) Upsetting event?	✓		
Research/class info?			
(e) Best friends/activities?	✓		
Research/class info?			
(f) Crowd/popularity?	✓		
Research/class info?			
(g) Future occupation?	✓		
Research/class info?			
(h) Routines/family?	✓		
Research/class info?			
(i) Frightening event?	✓		
Research/class info?			
(j) Advice/closing?	✓		
Research/class info?			
(k) Interview letter	✓		
(l) Reaction/integration			✓✓

- parental involvement

P.S. Joe congrats to your sister's new baby!

20

Total points out of 250 maximum and comments:

Dear Joe
Have you ever considered becoming a writer? Your astute, very observations, & wit are very compelling & moving - I always find myself chuckling or smiling & thinking when I read your work! Great letter & interview - but you're really missing the part 3 of integrating course info with other parts. Otherwise, excellent!

Joe Bustillos
Middle Childhood Development
May 7, 1992
Personal Interview Paper

PART i

As a writer my middle childhood has been the source of a great many feelings. The relationship between ones fiction and ones own memories about a given age are not all that dissimilar. Some of my own memories are quite like to those of a nine-year old named Briff, the main character of a novel in the works. So when I reflect on my childhood it is often a more familiar territory than I general recognize.

For much of my middle childhood years I was small to average in height and weight, relatively short dark brown hair, and brown eyes that I could never keep open when I smiled. My skin was tanned but not really dark (especially compared to my dad who spent all of his time outside). From what I can remember being darker than most of my classmates never became an issue until Junior High. Having darker skin was like having red hair or freckles, or funny colored eyes---it was something that we used to identify each other as kids, but it wasn't an issue.

When my family moved to Mission Viejo in the middle 1960s the place had no elementary school. So I was bused to the closest school in El Toro. I went to school in El Toro for two years. It was a pretty big school. The area was booming. So one year we had double sessions with half the school going in the morning and the other half going in the afternoon. The next year

I went to a new school in Dean Homes, which was still far enough away for me to be bused. The last few years of elementary school I attended another new school, Linda Vista, that was nearer to my home.

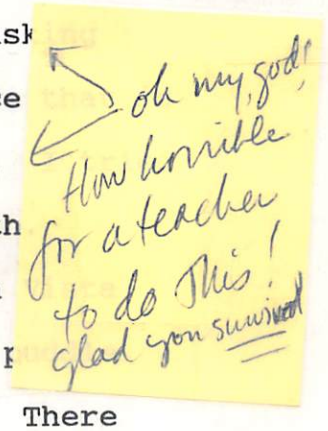
I don't know how to explain it but I have forgotten the names and faces of most of my elementary teachers (probably in self-defense). I did have one teacher, Mr. Marks, who left an impression on me. He read to us. He read "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," "The Glass Elevator," "Phantom Tollbooth," and "James and the Giant Peach." Funny thing is I don't remember if he was my fourth grade teacher or my fifth grade teacher. He was a "Mr. Robinson's Neighborhood" kind of guy, with his sweaters and ties but he wasn't condescending. I remember the guys name, that's gotta mean something. I don't remember having a least favorite teacher, but then I really don't remember any of my teacher's except Mr. Marks.

I remember being a happy kid in school, if not a little obnoxious. Most of my report cards were positive, a lot of "S"s and "O"s except in citizenship. I had a consistent predilection toward talking or making noises at the wrong moments. One of my first memories of middle elementary school was getting up during a math lesson to go to the back of the classroom to get a drink of water or something and being sternly warned by the teacher to quit whistling. I didn't even realize that I had been whistling.

It was probably to my favor that I changed schools as frequently as I did. My grades kept me afloat and I moved onto

the next school before my mouth could torpedo my efforts. Had my middle elementary school teachers had access to my earlier teachers it might have been different.

When I was in first grade my teacher became so fed up with my constant chatter that she actually attempted to tape my mouth shut with a wide strip of masking tape. It worked for a while, until I discovered that I could move my lower jaw if I licked the tape. I felt like the tin man from the Wizard of Oz with the tape over my mouth but my jaw free to talk. My teacher was furious. She sent me to the principal's office and told me to explain to him how it was that I managed to talk with mask tape over my mouth. In my childish first-grade innocence exactly what I did when I got to the principal's office. to explain to him how one talks with tape over ones mouth



One of my favorite memories from the years at Linda school was the year the rains came and left the biggest p I'd ever seen right in the middle of our playing field. There were several recesses where we were playing a time-honored form of rugby called "smear the queer" when the game turned into a mud bowl. I don't know how we go away with it, but somehow we managed to get up to our eyeballs in this deep brown mud and then at the end of recess get back to our seats relatively unnoticed (I think one time our play turned into a fight so we were sent to the principal's office to explain our condition and muddied behavior).

As far as negative memories and school, they usually had something to do with my mouth and my mom saying, "wait until your father comes home." Ugh.

My first negative memory came when I was in the third grade We had just moved to Mission Viejo and I had to wait by myself at the street corner for the school bus. My mom reminded me several times before I left the house that the name of my new school was "Gates School." When the bus came bearing the name "Taylor School Bus" I figured that that was for a different school and let it go by. I remember standing around on that corner for a long time before a neighbor lady confirmed my worst fears---the bus that I had let go by was my bus. Fortunately I've forgotten what my mother's specific reaction was but I remember wanting to never have my mom drive me to school again.

Me and buses, we've long had a strained relationship. One time I remember my father becoming angry at me when I got reported for spitting out the window of the bus (of course I was sitting toward the front when I did it). I don't know what he was so upset about. Actually I guess I can also blame or credit my misfortune with buses for me meeting a kid named Eddie McConnell, who eventually became my best friend.

In the anxiety of missing that bus on the first day I was mister eagle-eyes on the bus ride home. The next day I noticed a blond kid in my class who rode the same bus. As a matter of survival I decided to follow this kid around until I got the hang of the complicated bus schedule. It didn't take him long to

notice that I was following him around (I hadn't bothered to fill him in on my plan) and we eventually became life-long buddies.

Mission Viejo was a new community in those days so everyones yard was in the same stage of "development" (years later my high school architecture teacher would call it "Early American Dirt Clod"). McConnell's house stood near the top of a hill and his backyard opened out to a wide undeveloped valley. His folks had put in a lawn. I remember how that flat green lawn stood out in the bright blue sky that seemed to go on forever. I learned to play football in that backyard and one time broke a surveyors marker trying to catch Eddie as he ran along the sidelines for a touchdown.

Eddie and I did just about everything together. Besides playing football and destroying public property, we were in little league together. Our moms became den mothers when we were cub scouts. His mom worked so he had a lot more freedom after school. So we'd always hang out at his house after school.

Except for a lost decade from our junior year in high school until just before our ten year high school reunion, McConnell and I have been friends for almost twenty-five years (actually, I guess because we didn't communicate much during that decade you could say we've been friends for fifteen years). As one can guess there were a lot of times when we didn't see eye to eye on things.

As kids, during the '68 presidential election we were on different side (actually mimicking our parents' respective

political persuasions). Other personalities would add their point-of-view to our little world and teachers would separate us, but after so many years together we knew we had each other to turn to whenever we needed to. Even later when we became more interested in girls than hanging out with each we knew that that wouldn't ruin our friendship. (The reason for our decade long separation came about when I became a "Jesus Freak" and we found that we didn't have that much in common. When I decided to become less freaky then we found ourselves hanging out together again).

I was a member of the "average" crowd in terms of popularity. I never thought of myself as being part of the popular crowd. Even in elementary school the popular ones were the ones with the cool clothes. The popular boys were the athletic superstars and the popular girls were the beauty queens, even in elementary school. As the class clown I was afforded a certain amount of attention, which I liked, but I never felt like I was in the popular crowd.

When I was a kid I wanted to be an astronaut. McConnell and I made space capsules out of large appliance boxes. I made a space capsule for my G.I. Joe and built an Apollo-Saturn V model rocket. I think I lost sight of the space thing when adolescence set in and religion and girls became more important.

During those middle childhood years my father seemed to be a little absent when it came to teaching me stuff like sports. On my sixth or seventh birthday my dad got me my first baseball mit.

It was a right-handers glove. I guess he didn't notice th
since I was old enough to hold my own spoon I'd been left-
Money and things being the way they were in those days, my
sisters taught me how to play baseball using that right-ha
mit. When we moved to the Mission Viejo house he was pret
at teaching me stuff like mowing the lawn and raking the l

Oh, Joe, your wry sense of humor is so refreshing! I love it!

I was enough years behind my two older sisters to not have to put up with being compared with them when I reached their grades. Besides, we were going to new schools for the first four or five years so my teachers had never met either of my sisters by the time I was in their classes. I don't know if my reputation had an adverse on my younger brother or sister. I do remember that my brother became quite competitive with me when we got into high school (everything that I did, he had to do better).

On a given typical school day dad was up and out of the house long before the sun came up. Getting dressed, making our beds, that part of the day is pretty much a blur to me. Breakfast usually meant a bowl of wheaties and whatever luke-warm pancakes dad might have left behind. Brown paper-bag lunches were waiting for us on the counter when we were ready to hit the doors. I do remember spending a lot of time standing around with my buddies waiting for the bus to arrive (this was long after I'd gotten the hang of it and moved on to my "spitting out the window" phase).

The school day mostly consisted of recesses and lunch. I remember little else. Because my next oldest sister is three

years older than me and my younger brother is two and a half years younger I don't remember ever running into them during the course of a normal school day.

When I was attending Linda Vista school, which was closer to my home than any of the other schools, I usually tried to get permission from my mom to spend a half-hour at my friend's house who lived right near the school. Michael Lopez-Alegria was the buddy I usually hung around with. His father was in the aero-space industry so we'd dream about being astronauts and built play computers.

Dinner was usually before sunset. We all ate together and being the eldest boy it was my responsibility to say the prayer before the meal. Mom made dinner most nights and we kids did the dishes. Because we hated doing dishes, it was usually an all evening job. I don't remember how early we were sent to bed but knowing my folks it was probably a half hour before any other the other kids in the neighborhood.

Even though my dad's work wasn't always consistent, we had a pretty stable household. I really don't remember any family tragedy.

My words of wisdom to the next generation are to listen, learn and communicate.

PART II

Denise Knoblauch-Valverde:

I really didn't have an opinion about how I felt about how I looked at the time, except that I always felt that my mother cut my bangs too short and I had too much hair on my legs. It was coming through my knee-socks. You see, girls were wearing dresses because we weren't allowed to wear pants. So it was a real bummer. And my mom always made me wear these funky shoes. I just didn't like the way I was dressed.

As far as my self I had no opinion. My hair was black and it had red highlights in it. I was, at that time, about the same size as all the other kids. I was average height. Although in the class pictures I was always in the front row. Weight? I was average. I was real average. The whole thing was average. The only weird things was I had a quarter inch gap in my front teeth.

I went to Serrade Elementary School, named after Emma Serrade who died just a couple of years ago, back in Strongsville, Ohio. She was a local hero, her and her sisters. But I have no idea what they were heroes of. They were just part of the founders of Strongsville back in the late 1800's. It wasn't a small school. I had 40 kids in my class throughout most of the time. Most of the kids I went to school with from first grade . . . because the school opened, it was brand new. So it opened when I went to first grade and I had pretty much the same kids all the way through elementary school. [It was]

predominantly white, about 40 kids per classroom. And we had one teacher and no teacher-aides. We had one class at each grade level up to fifth grade. At fifth grade we started having several teachers. They started moving us around. By the time we got to sixth grade they had split the classroom in to the "haves" and the "have-nots." They just split us up and we got to change rooms. Big deal. It just gave us an excuse to screw around in the halls.

For my group, we got to stay in the same room and the teachers moved. But the other group got to change classes. So I figured that they were better.

But school was great. I had a blast. I did, I really like elementary school. My favorite teacher was Mr. Scherger, but he was in sixth grade, he wasn't in fifth grade.

I like Mrs. Chong in second grade. She was cool. She was the only oriental teacher I ever had. And I remember we had one Japanese kid in the class. It was weird, the rest were white. She was just really empathetic. And she would scold me when I was bad. Numerous times I missed recess and had to stay in the classroom with the lights out. I thought she was pretty fair. The principal, Mr. Darrel, he knew me quite well.

Mrs. Mahann was my third grade teacher, I didn't like her too much. I didn't like her because I wasn't like my [older] sister. "Why can't you be like your sister. She always studied so well." And Jan, my sister, was a real mathematician. When Jan was in high school she was taking trigonometry. When I was

in high school I was trying to work my way through geometry. And the teacher hated me.

It was one of the first times I'd been compared to one of my sisters. And again in sixth grade, but it was more like, "Oh shit, another Knoblauch." That was Mr. Scherger.

What I like about Mr. Scherger was that he pretty much told it that way it was going to be. If we were to be quiet, we were going to be quiet. It was black and white. And he was very easy to follow. If you screwed up . . . yeah, I spent a lot of time in the hall. And a lot of time going to the principal's office because I just wanted to see if he was for real, because none of the other teachers really were.

I was a "B" to a "C-" student, academically. I was a real clown. I had a good time . . . at everybody else's expense, mostly the teacher's.

I was generally a happy-go-lucky nymphs running around with my head cutoff. As far as happy memories, we always had our choir concerts. That was always fun. All the school would meet in the big high school auditorium. It was fun. But [other than that] I didn't do anything. There wasn't any athletics. There wasn't any enterprising things. I didn't win any awards.

In first grade, I came home, it was the first time I'd ever gotten yelled at at school, and I was . . . I remember because my brother was in a stroller and my mom was taking him for a walk and I went with her. And [before that] I never did [take walks with them]. And I told her and started crying because the

teacher upset me so badly. Just for doing something, I don't know what. My feelings were hurt because I always wanted to be the pleaser. And I screwed up somehow. I either forgot my work or I was talking or something (probably talking). And my mom's response was typical mom, "everything is going to be okay" response. It's all pretty vague.

My best friend was Ruth Beckman. She lived two doors down, a real clown. My family moved in in '64 and we met that Fall. And then it was the beginning of the end. We complimented each other because she'd make me laugh, I'd make her laugh. You know, we'd both go home with wet pants every day. We used to play together and ride bikes together. We were best friends until seventh grade. She started hanging out with a new gal who moved in. The new gal was older and I just didn't want to be around her. I was never real comfortable around Sharon. I didn't have any best friends after that.

We always used to fight, not regularly but we had a few. What we used to do was I had "Slow-poke," the bike, and it had like a four-inch sprocket on it. The sucker went no where quick. And she had a really nice banana bike. And so we used to switch off. She'd let me ride her bike, and it had great fenders on it. It was cool. It had streamers. So we would trade off. But we used to get into some really big fight when she didn't feel like sharing. And there were times when she'd end up going home and I'd . . . it was just like breaking up from a relationship. We'd

do this about once or twice a summer. I mean, we spent a lot of time together.

After seventh grade . . . I doubled with her to go to Senior Prom. Because we went to the same vocational school together and we came back together. And her boyfriend, now her husband, went to the same vocational school. So it was kind of fun. You know I don't remember the Prom, but we had a good time.

Popularity-wise, I certainly wasn't into the intellectuals. I was more in the class clown section of the class. I was in the average group. I don't remember anybody being particularly exceptional [i.e., popular]. I didn't sense any of that "I want to be so-and-so's friend" kind of stuff until Junior High. I don't know, we were all just so much the same.

Of the least popular kids we had Lester Gardener. Lester in sixth grade was about three feet tall. Poor Lester, he tried hanging himself in the boy's bathroom. He was kind of screwed up. He was my neighbor, he sat next to me.

We had Chuck Werk, he was not someone people liked to associate with. He was a rough-houser. Kids can be so mean. He was not an attractive looking person. He wasn't really ugly, he just looked different. He didn't look like the typical Midwestern Anglo-Saxon. He had black hair, which of course was always buzzed. He had big lips. That was it. And consequently he became quite the bully.

My fantasy in elementary school was to buy a '65 Mustang and to have a horse trailer with two horses in it. My fantasy today

is to have a '65 Mustang and to have a horse trailer with two horses in it. So I've grown since then. Now I know I can't have a '65 Mustang. Career-wise, hell no, I wasn't going to work. I was going to be just like my mom, except not have as many kids [Denise is one of six kids, count 'em!].

A typical day . . . my day started at eight O'clock at night. You got your bath which I took with my brother, wash the hair. My mother used to curl it, she'd roll it . . . as a child I never got a full night's sleep ['cause of those damn curlers]. Oh god, I got dents in my head. And then we had to have our pajamas and then had to line up to give father a kiss good-night. Father was in his chair in the living room reading a newspaper if wasn't asleep behind the newspaper with the television on. This was between seven-thirty and eight which was of course a free-for-all 'cause all four girls were in one room. I went to bed at eight until sixth or seventh or eighth grade unless I was bad, and then I went to bed at five O'clock (after I did the dishes).

So then we'd get up. I'd always hear my dad get up and leave for work. We never saw him. He left at about six, six-thirty. And then we'd all start getting up. We had two bathrooms. Luxury.

We had the girl's bathroom which had the sinks and the shower and the boy's bathroom which had just the toilet. Then we'd go eat our cereal 'cause that's all we got just cereal and milk, no toast. Then we got our lunches which were pre-packed the night before, which consisted of a peanut-butter and jelly

sandwich with hardly any peanut-butter and jelly on it, some potato chips and usually a piece of fruit or two cookies . . . OR two cookies. So you got three things, and a penny for milk, two cents for chocolate when they finally got around to it.

Had to walk to the bus stop with was about an eighth of a mile. It'd walk with Ruth. It was in the middle of the bus run. Some of my classmates were on the bus, so we had some good times. When I was in first grade Jan was in third grade and Paula [an older sister] was in sixth grade, so we were all in the same school but we never stuck together, only if there was a fight at the bus stop.

We'd get to school. Then there was lunch. We had this huge lunch monitor, this huge woman who hated children. Of course there were never any food fights at our table because Ruth and I were like the two hungriest people on the earth. There for a while I got a job in the cafeteria, so that I could get free lunches, at about fourth or fifth grade. So I could get something to eat, finally.

I got home about three-thirty. Usually I'd eat, and then lay down and watch TV and fall asleep. And then my father would come home, we'd eat at four-thirty. And then do the homework.

I never had much homework, not a whole lot. The hardest stuff for me, my mom used to make us read out loud individually as she was sewing, especially in first grade. Times tables are a real bear. I still don't know them. And maybe we got a half-

hour of television if we got our reports done. And then a bath if we needed it.

As far as scary times, besides when my dad was angry, but that was almost daily . . . Yeah, about four O'clock every day I was scared to death, I didn't know if I was going to eat tomorrow. Probably one of the highest anxieties I had was when we went to one of these campgrounds called Ponderosa Pine and we had taken the dog with us, which we never do. It was in the summer. My parents used to square-dance and we'd have these square-dance weekends with the travel-trailer. So we'd taken the dog. And this weather came up out of nowhere and was tearing up travel-trailers. And the electricity went out. The interesting thing was that I watched the dog, I remember. She was sleeping so I figured that everything was okay. That was the only thing that kept me from crying or being stupid.

What words of advise can I give? Wear a condom. Just say no. I think it's really different for kids today. The innovation of television and the way that parents have let that be a childrens babysitter, I think has been a major screw up. I think the media has no business trying to raise families just as educators have no business trying to raise families. I think it's a real problem that parents aren't connecting. I think that I was raised without a television and I think it's kept me in the real world. Granted, I have my hopes and dreams. But I don't want the race car, and I don't want the man that's chiseled, and

the big boob syndrome and the blond hair. That's a bunch of crap. And that's how our kids are being raised.

PART III

At the risk of over stating the obvious, the role of parental involvement obviously makes the biggest difference in the world whether we as kids knew that our folks loved us. Even when we didn't like their restrictions, and when they were dead wrong about their own beliefs, just having our folks show interest or being there made all the difference. And we survived too.

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